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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

267th meeting

Monday, 12 December 2005, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Rowe ..... (Sierra Leone)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Opening of the session

The Chairman: I declare open the 2006 organizational session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chairman: The provisional agenda for this meeting has been published in today's *Journal*.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Commission to adopt the provisional agenda?

The agenda was adopted.

The Chairman: As all members are aware, last Thursday, 8 December, the General Assembly adopted resolution 60/91, on the report of the Disarmament Commission. The resolution welcomed the efforts made by the Commission during its organizational meeting in July 2005 towards achieving the Commission's objectives. The Assembly recommended that the Commission intensify consultations on those efforts, with a view to reaching definitive agreements before the start of its substantive session in 2006.

Earlier, almost in anticipation of the adoption of the resolution, I had asked the Secretariat to distribute to members of the Commission my compromise proposal on the substantive item on nuclear disarmament. In that note I explained, as far as possible, why I believed that we should move forward and why we should deal with that particular item as soon as possible, so that the Commission could start its substantive work early next year. The proposal is now before the Commission.

In my note I recommended that the Commission adopt the proposal. Is there any objection?

It appears there is no objection to my proposal on nuclear disarmament as the first item on the provisional agenda of the Disarmament Commission for the 2006 substantive session.

Perhaps at this stage we should go through the two items again. The Commission will recall that we had two agenda items: one was the nuclear disarmament proposal, and the other was on conventional weapons disarmament. Then there was the issue of the Commission's working methods. We therefore had two items and one issue.

With the Commission's permission, I would like to read out the items and issues for the provisional agenda of the Disarmament Commission's 2006 substantive session. The first item is entitled "Recommendations for achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons". The second is entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons". The Commission would also address "The issue of measures for improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the Disarmament Commission.". I remind the Commission that we agreed to consider the issue in plenary during

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the 2006 substantive session, with equitable time allocated to it — and I emphasize that, "with equitable time allocated to it", in the plenary.

We can thus conclude that we now have an agenda for the Commission's 2006 substantive session.

I would like to express my thanks to members for their cooperation. As the Commission is aware, we had very intensive consultations in the summer. At times it appeared that we had reached agreement, and then it appeared we had not. But I think that the conclusion was that we did make some progress, although the views concerning that progress varied from one delegation to another. But it was my feeling that — and this was expressed, even though implicitly rather than explicitly, in the resolution adopted by the Assembly on Thursday — the Commission felt that it had accomplished something, that it would not want to go back and that the Commission is going to move forward and start to deal with the substantive issues.

Mr. McBride (United Kingdom): On behalf of the European Union, we would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulate you for leading the Commission towards agreeing an agenda. The European Union looks forward to working on that agenda and discussing substance in 2006.

Mr. Moungara Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I too want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your efforts to help us achieve an agenda for the next session. Although my delegation was not present for the Commission's entire session over the past few months, we would like to assure you of our firm support.

With regard to the last question that you raised, Mr. Chairman, my delegation did not completely understand the title of the latter agenda item. Could you clarify the question of the second agenda item?

The Chairman: The second item is "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons". The text of both items as well as of the third issue appears in the report of the Commission, contained in document A/60/42. Members will recall that everything was agreed ad referendum. The only change we have now is on the item on nuclear disarmament. The other item, on conventional weapons, will remain the same, as will the issue of working methods.

We shall move on to the next item on t concerning the Bureau. As members are Bureau of the Commission was constitu present form, with some difficulties or def organizational session in July. We still h vacant slots: a Vice-Chair from the Group States and a Vice-Chair from the Group European States. There are two vacancies in at present.

I feel strongly that we should try, possible, to devise some kind of guid constituting the Bureau. In other words, we s regional distribution into account.

I understand how difficult it is for Mem to volunteer to serve on the Commission. Pe is due to the notion that the Disarmament C is asleep or is fading out. But I hope that, now resuscitated this important body for disarman United Nations system, we can try as best a to come up with the names for the Bureau.

I was saying that we could use the geo distribution pattern of the First Committee a to constitute the Bureau by rotation among groups. So, in anticipation of our discussion and I would like to have members' input on t have prepared a list, which the secretariat is distribute. From it, members can get a pictu state of affairs since 1998, when, for exa Chair was occupied by a representative of th European Group — Belarus — and the R came from Croatia. In 1999, the Chair was fr and the Rapporteur from Trinidad and Toba the Latin American and Caribbean Group. It was the turn of Asia, with Iran in the Chair a from the African region, as Rapporteur. Then Jamaica, from the Latin American Group, Chair and Myanmar, from the Asian Gro Rapporteur. In 2002 Italy, from the Group of European and other States, was the Chair and from the African Group, was Rapporteur. In Bureau of 2002 continued: Italy as Chair and as Rapporteur. In 2004 Georgia, of the E Eastern European States, was the Chair and the Group of Western European and other St Rapporteur. Now in 2005 Sierra Leone, of the Group, is the Chair and Bulgaria, of the European Group, is Rapporteur. Members a before them another list, which shows th

distribution of the composition of the Bureau, not only the Chair and the Rapporteur, from 1998 to 2005.

Of course, it is not to be a final decision, but we must have some kind of a system or guidelines for rotating the chairmanship. That way, States would know that, for instance — unless the Commission decides otherwise — in 2007, it will be the turn of Asia, or Africa or Western Europe and other States to provide the Chair. On that basis, we can start working.

I will just give members two or three minutes to browse through that paper. I will then take comments on how we should proceed, first of all, with the 2006 Bureau.

Mrs. Martinic (Argentina): First, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, for leading these consultations, which finally allow us to agree on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission. We hope that substantive work next year will produce fruit after the three-year cycle. Of course, my delegation stands ready to work to achieve that objective, as we have been working in the past.

Mr. Chairman, I also thank you for providing these charts showing the rotation of the Chair and the Disarmament Commission's other Bureau positions. This year was my eleventh session of the Disarmament Commission. Perhaps someone can correct me, but it is my understanding that rotation in the Commission's Bureau is already established, as it is in the First Committee. Therefore, next year, the responsibility for providing the Chair for the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission falls to the Group of Asian States.

Accordingly, it is the understanding of my delegation that there are two issues here: first, we must fill the two posts in the current Bureau that are still vacant so that we can finalize matters properly, and secondly, we need to constitute the Bureau for the 2006 substantive session.

In that connection, I think we need some time for consultations among the various regional groups. In accordance with the Charter, as I said, the Asian Group has the responsibility to provide the Chair for the Bureau, and the Rapporteur will be from the African Group. Then, of course, we will need Vice-Presidents for the Bureau and chairpersons for the working groups to address the substantive items on the agenda.

In short, so as not to take up too much of our time, I suggest that we take matters step by step: first, complete the Bureau for 2005 in order to finalize matters properly, and then begin consultations among the various groups to constitute the Bureau for 2006.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I support what the previous speaker said about the future distribution of duties by group with respect to the Chair and the Rapporteur. However, given the fact that we spent a great deal of effort this year trying to constitute the Bureau, perhaps we should keep the same Bureau for 2006, filling vacant posts as needed.

The Chairman: First, are there any comments regarding the proposals by the representative of Argentina? As I understand, they are that we first fill the two vacancies in the current Bureau and then deal with the Bureau for 2006 and the chairpersons of the Commission's subsidiary bodies later.

Mr. McBride (United Kingdom): Perhaps my question is the result of ignorance, but I was wondering, with regard to filling the vacant posts in the 2005 Bureau, in what way will the new members participate? I wonder whether we are spending a lot of effort on getting two extra bodies, when in fact the work of the 2005 Bureau is nearly finished. I believe that we may waste a lot of time trying to fill two vacancies, when there may be precedents in terms of Bureaus that are not fully constituted in other United Nations bodies. Perhaps we should just draw a line and move on to 2006.

With regard to the proposal made by my Russian colleague — that the 2005 Bureau serve as the Bureau in 2006 — my delegation is not against it. There seems to have been a precedent in that regard, because the Bureaus for 2002 and 2003 were identical.

At this stage, I would just like to point out that the United Kingdom was part of the Bureau in 2005 because we held the European Union (EU) presidency during the Commission's substantive session. In 2006, we will not hold the EU presidency, so we are likely to step down from the Bureau. That does not mean that we will not find an alternative candidate afterwards. However, I just wanted to raise that issue so that it will not be assumed that we will be a member of the Bureau in 2006. This does not reflect any change in the priority that the United Kingdom accords the Disarmament Commission.

The Chairman: I said that perhaps we should hear comments about the Argentine proposal. There were also some comments about the proposal by the representative of the Russian Federation. So I would ask representatives to comment on both proposals, because they are interlinked.

I give the floor to the representative of Argentina on a point of order.

Mrs. Martinic (Argentina): I am sorry to make this point of order, but with a view to the efficient management of our time, I would like to withdraw my first proposal — that we finalize the constitution of the Bureau for 2005 — taking into account the second chart distributed by the secretariat, which indicates that there are precedents in which the Bureau was not fully constituted. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I ask that we consider my second proposal: that we adjourn this meeting for consultations among the regional groups in order to constitute the 2006 Bureau. There is no sense in continuing to discuss the composition of the 2005 Bureau.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Argentina for that clarification.

Mr. Rachmianto (Indonesia): With regard to the constitution of the Bureau, I wish to say, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, that we should follow established practice, which is based on rotational geographic representation. In that regard, perhaps we should give the Asian Group the opportunity to consider candidates for Chairperson for the 2006 substantive session. In the event that the Asian Group is unable to come up with any candidates, perhaps, as my colleague from the United Kingdom said, we can follow the precedent set in 2002 and 2003, of using the same Bureau to continue the work of the Commission's substantive session. Once again, as you stated, Mr. Chairman, we would like to support established practice within the United Nations system.

Mr. Najafi (Islamic Republic of Iran): First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your efforts concerning the issue of the agenda. Although my delegation is not satisfied with the most recent formulation, in order to demonstrate flexibility and pave the way for the Commission's substantive session, we join in the consensus regarding the agenda. We are happy to see that at least the issue of achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament appears as the first agenda item. We are prepared to participate fully Commission's discussions in 2006.

Concerning the second issue — the compo of the Bureau — I understand, Mr. Chairman regard to the chart you have prepared for this m that the reason for the similarities in the Bur 2002 and 2003 was that there were no meeti 2002; it was not that the Bureau continued its wo two consecutive years. If we look at the report Disarmament Commission for 2002, doc A/57/42, we see that paragraph 9, in the e entitled "Organization and work of the 2002 ses states that at its first organizational meeting, h 2 November 2001, the Commission, becau extraordinary circumstances, decided to contin work in 2003. That means that there were no me in 2002. So I just wanted to remind members th similarities in 2002 and 2003 were due to that iss

The last point I have is that, as a non-memb also believe that the principle of rotation shou respected. It is a precedent, and we would li continue to adhere to that principle.

Mr. Charwath (Austria): First, we should like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on the fac you have succeeded in leading us to an agreed ag I will be brief.

I think, as my colleague from the U Kingdom has already said, that they in a na capacity will probably not take part in a new B and, as Argentina has suggested, we should have time to consult and regional groups should con with suggestions. I think this is the best way rega the Bureau. Regional groups should consider decide whom they want to nominate. I think we all need a little bit of time for that.

Mr. Baldi (Italy): I should also lik congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, upon the achievement today of approving the agenda a being sure that the next session will be a substa one. Many of us have been looking forward to this we owe you our thanks.

I just wanted to take the floor to confirm wha Iranian colleague was saying, since Italy held the in 2002 and 2003. It was just due to the fact that was no 2002 session, so the Bureau continued. It a real precedent in this case. And of course we with the Argentinian proposal, which was

supported by all the other colleagues who intervened, to continue with the normal rotation. I am sure that the next Bureau will be able to build on what we have achieved today.

The Chairman: Now I would appeal to the regional groups to meet at their convenience and, given that everyone knows what the situation is now, try to come up with a Bureau for the 2006 substantive session of the Commission, as well as perhaps discuss suggestions for the chairmanship of the subsidiary bodies.

It is not my duty to establish a deadline, but I just want to draw members' attention to the fact that it is important for us to work as speedily as possible. There is, as far as I know, no provision in the conference services for any organizational meeting for this year. The next one will be some time probably in February or March or thereabouts. By then I hope that some decision will have been taken among the regional groups. Then the information will be circulated or transmitted to the secretariat.

We do not want to relax. There are other issues coming up, such as small arms, et cetera, but I think that the momentum that we have now should be maintained. So I hope that perhaps by February the secretariat will be in a position to let delegations know the state of affairs concerning the Bureau for the 2006 substantive session.

Mrs. Martinic (Argentina): I am sorry to take the floor again. I would like to ask the secretariat the dates for the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission and also to encourage regional groups to consult quickly and try to get the Bureau constituted as soon as possible so that it will be in a position to start consultations.

Mr. Cherniavsky (Secretary to the Commission): The dates of the substantive session will be 10 to 28 April 2006.

The Chairman: Are there any other matters to be discussed?

I think the organizational meeting next year will depend on the response that the secretariat receives from Member States concerning their readiness to constitute the Bureau for the 2006 substantive session.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.